UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.6/1995/L.17/Add.1
3 April 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
Thirty-ninth session
New York, 15 March-4 April 1995
Agenda item 3 (e)

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Draft Platform for Action

Addendum

Chapter II

GLOBAL FRAMEWORK

6. The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace is taking place as the world stands poised on the threshold of a new millennium.

7. This Platform for Action upholds the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and builds upon the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, as well as relevant resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The formulation of the Platform for Action is aimed at establishing a basic group of priority actions that should be carried out in the next five years.

8. The Platform for Action recognizes the importance of the agreements reached at the World Summit for Children, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, and the World Summit for Social Development, which had set out specific approaches and commitments to fostering sustainable development and international cooperation and to strengthening the role of the United Nations to that end. Similarly, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the International Conference on Nutrition, the International Conference on Primary Health Care and

the World Conference on Education for All have all addressed the various facets of development and [universally recognized] human rights, within their specific perspectives, paying significant attention to the role of women and girls. In addition, the International Year of the World's Indigenous People, the International Year of the Family, the International Year for Tolerance, the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women, and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women have also emphasized the issues of women's empowerment and equality.

9. [The Platform for Action is drawn up in full conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It is recognized that the formulation and implementation of strategies, policies, and programmes and actions in all areas of concern are the responsibility of each country, with full respect for the various [religious ethical values, cultural background and philosophical convictions of all its people] and in conformity with all [universal] human rights and fundamental freedoms.]

10. Since the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, held at Nairobi in 1985, and the adoption of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the world has experienced profound political, economic, social and cultural changes, which have had both positive and negative effects on women.

11. [The World Conference on Human Rights recognized that the human rights of women and the girl child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. [The universal nature of these human rights and freedoms is beyond question.] The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on the grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.]

12. [The World Conference on Human Rights reaffirmed the solemn commitment of all States to fulfil their obligations to promote universal respect for, and observance and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, other instruments related to human rights and international law. The universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question.]

13. The end of the cold war has resulted in international changes and diminished competition between the super-Powers. The threat of a global armed conflict has diminished, while international relations have improved and prospects for peace among nations have increased. Although the threat of global conflict has been reduced, wars of aggression, armed conflicts, [alien domination and foreign occupation], civil wars, terrorism and [extremist violence] continue to plague many parts of the world. Grave violations of human rights of women occur, particularly in times of armed conflict, and include murder, torture, systematic rape, [forced pregnancy] and forced] abortion, in particular under policies of "ethnic cleansing".

14. The maintenance of peace and security at the global, regional and local levels, together with the prevention of policies of aggression and ethnic

cleansing and the resolution of armed conflict, is crucial for the protection of the [universal] human rights of women and girl children, as well as for the elimination of all forms of violence against them and of their use as a weapon of war.

15. [Consequently, a huge portion of global expenditures has been devoted to the production, trafficking and trade of arms, thus substantially reducing resources for social development. Moreover, debt burden has forced many developing countries to undertake structural adjustment policies that are detrimental to their social development. The number of people living in poverty has therefore increased disproportionately in most developing countries, particularly the heavily indebted countries, during the last decade.]

16. [In this context, we should also emphasize the social dimension of development. Accelerated economic growth, although necessary for social development, does not by itself improve the quality of life of the population: indeed, it can aggravate social inequality and marginalization. Hence, it is indispensable to search for new alternatives based on a holistic approach on all aspects of development: growth, equity, sustainable development, solidarity, participation, peace and respect for human rights.]

17. A world-wide movement towards democratization has opened up the political process in many nations, but the popular participation of women in key decision-making as full and equal partners, particularly in politics, is not yet achieved. [South Africa's policy of institutionalized racism - apartheid - has been dismantled and a peaceful and democratic transfer of power has occurred.] [Similarly, in Central and Eastern Europe the transition to parliamentary democracy has been rapid and relatively peaceful. In some countries from the same region, this process has been followed by armed conflict that has resulted in grave violations of human rights.]

18. A widespread economic recession as well as political instability in some regions, have been responsible for setting back development goals in many countries. This has led to an expansion of unspeakable poverty. Of the more than 1 billion people living in abject poverty, women are an overwhelming majority. The rapid process of change and adjustment in all sectors, has also led to increased unemployment and underemployment, with particular impact on women. In many cases, structural adjustment programmes have not been designed so as to minimize their negative effects on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups or on women, nor have they been designed to ensure positive effects on those groups by preventing their marginalization in economic and social activities. The Final Act of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations underscored the increasing interdependence of national economies, as well as the importance of trade liberalization and access to open dynamic markets. The period has also been characterized by heavy military spending in some regions. Despite increases by some countries, overall official development assistance (ODA) has recently declined.

19. Absolute poverty and the feminization of poverty, unemployment, the increasing fragility of the environment, continued violence against women and the widespread exclusion of half of humanity from institutions of power and governance underscore the need for a continued search for development, peace,

security and solutions seeking to ensure a people-centred sustainable development. The participation and leadership of the half of humanity that is female is essential to the success of that search. Therefore, only [a just and equitable social and economic international order and] a radical transformation of the relationship between women and men to one of full and equal partnership will enable the world to meet the challenges of the next century.

20. Recent international economic developments have had in many cases a disproportionate impact on women and children, the majority of whom live in developing countries. For those States that have carried a large burden of foreign debt, structural adjustment programmes and measures, though beneficial in the long term, have led to a reduction in social expenditures, thereby adversely affecting women, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries. This is exacerbated when responsibilities for basic social services have shifted from Governments to women.

21. Economic recession in many developed and developing countries, as well as ongoing restructuring in countries with economies in transition, have had a disproportionately negative impact on women's employment. Women often have no choice but to take employment that lacks long-term job security or involves dangerous working conditions, to work in unprotected home-based production or to go unemployed. Many women enter the labour market in under-remunerated and undervalued jobs seeking to improve their household income; others have decided to migrate for the same purpose. Without any reduction in their other responsibilities, this has increased the total burden of work for women.

22. Macro and microeconomic policies and programmes, including structural adjustment, have not always been designed to take account of their impact on women and girl children, especially for those living in poverty. Poverty has increased in both absolute and relative terms, and the number of women living in poverty has increased in most regions. There are many urban women living in poverty; however, the plight of women living in rural and remote areas deserves special attention given the stagnation of development in such areas. In developing countries, even those in which national indicators have shown improvement, the majority of rural women continue to live in conditions of economic underdevelopment and social marginalization.

23. Women are key contributors to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace. Growing numbers of women have achieved economic independence through gainful employment.

24. One fourth of all households world wide are headed by women and many other households are dependent on female income even where men are present. Female-maintained households are very often among the poorest due to, inter alia, wage discrimination, occupational segregation patterns in the labour market and other gender-based barriers. Family disintegration, population movements between urban and rural areas within countries, international migration, war and internal displacements are factors contributing to the rise of female-headed households.

25. Recognizing that the achievement and maintenance of peace and security are a precondition for economic and social progress, women are increasingly establishing themselves as central actors in a variety of capacities in the movement of humanity for peace. Their full participation in decision-making, conflict prevention and resolution, and all other peace initiatives is essential to the realization of lasting peace.

26. The Fourth World Conference on Women should accelerate the process that formally began in 1975, which was proclaimed International Women's Year by the United Nations General Assembly. The year was a turning-point in putting women's issues on the agenda. The United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) was a world-wide effort to examine the status and rights of women and to bring women into decision-making at all levels. In 1979, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which entered into force in 1981 and set an international standard for what was meant by equality between women and men. In 1985, the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace adopted the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, to be implemented by the year 2000. There has been important progress in achieving equality between women and men. Many Governments have enacted legislation to promote equality between women and men and have established national machineries to ensure the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in all spheres of society. International agencies have focused greater attention on women's status and roles.

27. The growing strength of the non-governmental sector, particularly women's organizations, [and others who support feminist ideals] has become a driving force for change. Non-governmental organizations have played an important advocacy role in advancing legislation or mechanisms to ensure the promotion of women. They have also become catalysts for new approaches to development. Many Governments have increasingly recognized the important role that non-governmental organizations play and the importance of working with them for progress. [Yet, in some countries, Governments continue to restrict the ability of non-governmental organizations to operate freely.] Women, through non-governmental organizations, have participated in and strongly influenced community, national, regional and global forums and international debates.

28. Since 1975, knowledge of the status of both women and men respectively has increased and is contributing to further actions aimed at promoting equality between women and men. In several countries, there have been important changes in the relationships between women and men, especially where there have been major advances in education for women and significant increases in their participation in the paid labour force. The boundaries of the gender division of labour between productive and reproductive roles are gradually being crossed as women have started to enter formerly male-dominated areas of work and men have started to accept greater responsibilities for domestic tasks, including child care. However, changes in women's roles have been greater and much more rapid than changes in men's roles. In many countries, the differences between women's and men's achievements and activities are still not recognized as the consequences of socially constructed gender roles rather than immutable biological differences.

29. Moreover, 10 years after the Nairobi Conference equality between women and men has still not been achieved. On average, women represent a mere 10 per cent of all elected legislators world wide and in most national and international administrative structures, both public and private, they remain underrepresented. The United Nations is no exception. Fifty years after its creation, the United Nations is continuing to deny itself the benefits of women's leadership by their underrepresentation at decision-making levels within the Secretariat and the specialized agencies.

30. [Women play a critical role in the family, the basic unit of society. States Parties who have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women have done so bearing in mind the great contribution of women to the welfare of the family and to the development of society, which is still not fully recognized. They have also borne in mind the social significance of maternity and the role of both parents in the family and in the upbringing of children, and are aware that the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination but that the upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between women and men and society as a whole.]

31. [Religion plays a central role in the lives of millions of women, in the way they live and the aspirations they have for the future. While any form of extremism, religious or secular, has a negative impact on women in the form of violence and discrimination, a moral and ethical climate that prevents all forms of corruption in society and exploitation of women is needed if equality, development and peace are to be realized. The serious issues with which the world is confronted today require a more effective response by societies to not only the material but also the spiritual needs of individuals, including women.]

32. While the rate of growth is on the decline, the growth of the world population is at an all-time high in absolute numbers, with current increments approaching 90 million persons annually. Two other major demographic trends have had profound repercussions on the dependency ratio within families. In many developing countries, 45 to 50 per cent of the population is less than 25 years old, while in industrialized nations both the number and proportion of elderly people are increasing. According to United Nations estimates, by the year 2025 70 per cent of the population over 60 years of age will be living in developing countries, of whom more than half will be women. Care of children, the sick and the elderly is a responsibility that due to the lack of equality and the unbalanced distribution of remunerated and unremunerated work between women and men, falls disproportionately on women.

33. Many women face particular barriers because of various diverse factors in addition to their gender. Often these diverse factors isolate or marginalize such women and result, inter alia, in a denial of their [universal] human rights, and their lack of access or a denial of their access to education and vocational training, employment, housing and economic self-sufficiency, as well as their exclusion from decision-making processes. Such women are often denied the opportunity to contribute to their communities as part of the mainstream.

34. The past decade has also witnessed a growing recognition of the distinct interests and concerns of indigenous women, whose identity, cultural traditions

and forms of social organization enhance and strengthen the communities in which they live. Indigenous women often face barriers both as women and as members of indigenous communities.

35. In the past 20 years, the world has seen an explosion in the field of communications. With advances in computer technology and satellite and cable television, global access to information continues to increase and expand, creating new opportunities for the participation of women in communications and the mass media and for the dissemination of information about women. On the other hand, the global communication networks have been used to proliferate stereotyped and demeaning images of women for narrow commercial and consumerist purposes. Until women participate equally in both the technical and decision-making areas of communications and media, including the arts, they will continue to be misrepresented and awareness of the reality of women's lives will continue to be lacking. [The commitment to promoting human values and dignity on the part of the media is seriously lacking]

36. Continuing environmental degradation that affects all human lives often has a more direct impact on women. Women's health and their livelihood are threatened by pollution and toxic wastes, large-scale deforestation, desertification, drought, and depletion of the soil and of coastal and marine resources, with a rising incidence of environmentally related health problems and even death reported among women and girls. Those most affected are rural and indigenous women, whose livelihood and daily subsistence depends directly on sustainable ecosystems.

37. [The major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances.] Therefore, equitable social development that recognizes empowering people living in poverty, particularly women, to utilize environmental resources sustainably is a necessary foundation for sustainable development. Women as citizens can help change consumption patterns in their multiple role as consumers, householders, workers and voters.

38. Global trends have brought profound changes in family survival strategies and structure[s]. Rural to urban migration has increased substantially in all regions. The global urban population is projected to reach 57 per cent of the total population by the year 2000. An estimated 125 million people are migrants, refugees and displaced persons, half of whom live in developing countries. These massive movements of people have profound consequences for family structure[s] and well-being and have unequal consequences for women and men, including in many cases the sexual exploitation of women.

39. According to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates, by the beginning of 1995 the number of cumulative cases of Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) was 4.5 million. An estimated 19.5 million men, women and children have been infected with human immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV) since it was first diagnosed and it is projected that another 20 million will be infected by the end of the decade. Among new cases, women are twice as likely to be infected than men. In the early stage of the AIDS pandemic, women were not infected in large numbers; however, there are now about 8 million women infected. Young women and

adolescents are particularly vulnerable. It is estimated that by the year 2000 more than 13 million women will be infected and 4 million women will have died from AIDS-related conditions. In addition, about 250 million new cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are estimated to occur every year. The rate of STD/HIV/AIDS transmission is increasing at an alarming rate among women and girls, especially in developing countries.

40. Since 1975, significant knowledge and information has been generated about the status of women and the conditions under which they live. Throughout their entire life cycle, women's daily existence and long-term aspirations are restricted by discriminatory attitudes, unjust social and economic structures, and a lack of resources in most countries that prevent their full and equal participation. In a number of countries, the practice of pre-natal sex selection, higher rates of mortality among very young girls and lower rates of school enrolment for girls as compared with boys suggest that "son preference" is curtailing the access of girl children to food, education and health care [and even life itself]. [Discrimination against women begins even before birth and must therefore be addressed from birth/then onwards.]

41. [Girls of today are women of tomorrow. If tomorrow's women are to become equal partners with men in social change and development, now is the time to accord the girl child her rightful share of human dignity and opportunity. Yet there exists world-wide discrimination and violence against girls that begin even before they are born and continue unabated throughout their lives. They have less access to nutrition, health and education. They enjoy fewer rights and opportunities and less benefits of childhood and adolescence than boys. They are subjected to sexual and economic exploitation, violence and harmful practices, such as feticide, infanticide, female genital mutilation and early/child marriage. Their daily existence and long-term aspirations are restricted by attitudes, structures and a lack of resources that prevent their full and equal participation. For a girl to develop her full potential, she should be nurtured in an enabling environment of dignity and opportunity where her specific needs for survival, protection and development are met and her equal rights safeguarded.]

42. More than half the world's population is under the age of 25 and most of the world's youth - more than 80 per cent - live in developing countries. Policy makers must recognize the implications of these demographics. Special measures must be taken to ensure that young women have the life skills necessary for active and effective participation in all levels of social, cultural, political and economic leadership. It will be critical for the international community to demonstrate a new commitment to the future - a commitment to inspiring a new generation of women and men to work together for a more just society. This new generation of leaders must accept and promote a world in which every child is free from injustice, oppression and inequality, and in which she is free to develop to her own potential. The principle of equality [and equity] of women and men must therefore be integral to the socialization process.

Annex

The following paragraph was for inclusion in section 5:

[The international conferences, summits and processes described above are evidence that there are significant challenges facing the world that the world is prepared to meet. Recognition of the role of women in meeting these challenges is a prerequisite for achieving equality and for the shared responsibility of women and men. International consensus exists on the role of women in development and the international community must commit itself to action to implement the strategies outlined in the Platform for Action. However, implementation also requires commitments from Governments. Thus, as the Fourth World Conference on Women is a Conference of commitment and action, States have responded to the challenge by separately stating national commitments for national action within the context of the Platform for Action, which will result in practical outcomes for girls and women of all ages. The specific commitments of each nation appear in an annex to this Platform for Action.

The following paragraph was proposed for inclusion in section 4:

Short-term measures and the reformulation of long-term social policies and investments are required for a more [equitable] [equal] sharing of family responsibilities between women and men. [Women have different requirements at various stages of their life cycle, which need to be addressed by policy planning and programme and project implementation based on gender-sensitive analyses.